Mother cradle us all before sunrise

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/62529154.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	Other
Fandom:	大神 | Okami (Video Games)
Relationships:	Amaterasu & Ushiwaka | Waka (Okami), Amaterasu & Celestials, Minor Amaterasu & Ishaku
Characters:	Ushiwaka | Waka (Okami), Amaterasu (Okami), The celestials, Yamata no Orochi | Orochi (Okami), Minor Nagi - Character, Minor Ishaku
Additional Tags:	Angst, Angst and Hurt/Comfort, Angst and Tragedy, Found Family, Pre-Game Events
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-01-26 Words: 5,734 Chapters: 1/1

Mother cradle us all before sunrise

by Nevaneal

Summary

The life of the divine Sun and her family.

The fall of the Celestial Plain and the loss of a home.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

1.

Life on the Celestial Plain is quite easy. The Sun rises, as it always does, the birds sing, Celestials giggle as they run through the long lush grass and let their hair tangle with the wind. Sometimes, just to see them laugh a little bit harder, Amaterasu waves the tip of her inky tail and wills a stronger gust to chase after them.
It is how life on this divine island has always worked, a haven of peace and safety. Nothing matters as much as their everyday joy, and the travels the goddess makes to the earth below. They adore those excursions, because she always brings back treasures for them, mostly of human making.
If they were to describe what they were, they would burst in giggles and claim “a family!” – with due respect to Mother Sun –.

Amaterasu stands strong since the early days of the universe on this plain, and she will stretch the protection of her cradle as far as she is needed.

⁂

Every day is the same, until one stutters and introduces change. The Celestials awake to a bright sun, and a black cloud in the sky. They whisper among each other, intrigued, curious, and group together in the middle of the plains. They don’t fear, the children of the heavens, how could they when Mother walks by their side.
It takes a long time for the dark cloud to take shape, something so bizarre they can’t make sense of its meaning. Sunset falls, and a strong howl tears through the Celestial Plain. The sun stands strong once more, and Amaterasu strolls to the group, Solar Flare silently pulsing at her back. She isn’t threatening, per say, but she doesn’t utter a word as she stares unblinkingly above.

The black structure collapses on the divine land, it digs in the soil and rips flowers and lush grass apart. The sound it makes as it comes to a stop, oh the wind could have sang laments about it, the wheeze of agony that the newly dead pushes through to desperately show the world it exists.
The Celestials wait in silence, confused. Their wings flutter hesitantly at their side, unknowing of what to do next. Collectively, they turn their heads towards Mother Sun. The wolf waits as well. The eerie blue veins of the structure flicker one last time before fading away to grey. Only then does the goddess rise, ear flickering, and trots towards the giant corpse amidst her home.

Smoke comes through the opening, oozing like blood from a wound. The wolf’s fur raises and she barks alarmingly, before jumping through the entrance, Solar Flare bursting into flames as it sweeps in the darkness.
The Celestials wait, holding their breaths, and their hands, but still they do not fear. Amaterasu comes out soon enough, steps slow, and they gasp as they notice the unconscious figure sprawled on her back. There is a survivor of something, in that strange thing ! Quick,

quick, O Amaterasu, let us help ! Quick, bring water, oh Goddess he is so injured ! Go on, let us bring him home, bring him home, bring him home.

Amaterasu entrusts her charge to the deft and caring fingers of her children and shrugs off the dust. As they leave in a hurry, she casts a mournful gaze to the moon, and ponders.

⁂

The Child of the Moon is an oddity to her. He is not someone familiar nor close enough to her cradle; she made the sun and the earth and the hearth and the warmth. He comes from a tribe whose entire existence relies on a different system than the one running into her veins. Where she reads tales of adventure in the water ripples, he studies them in the impersonal, cold lines carved into walls and stone tablets. Where she thinks simply, he thinks in riddles. She witnesses his unease around the Celestials, how incredulous he stares at them as they bare their throat to the sky and live like nothing else matters. He shows reverent wariness and respect when she walks by, large wolf resplendent with divinity, that morphs into bemusement when she licks Celestials' hands and encourages the younger, smaller ones to ride her to the lake.

It is thanks to the childish kindness of the Celestials that he starts speaking and shares his name. It saddens Amaterasu, to think someone would be so wholly uncomfortable with her presence simply because she is divine. A low whine escapes her throat as she watches the Odd Man led amidst the hills by Azumi. So unfair.

The Celestial Plain is then made up of several attempts from a white wolf to gain the trust of a particularly wary man, and despite the failures of it all, the Celestials giggle as they watch Waka's eyes light whenever the goddess arrives, or the burst of joy flashing across his face when Mother makes a field of flowers grow from underneath her paws. Try as he might, the little moonchild, even he will see his caution molten by the pure warmth of Amaterasu.

The first time they exist in the same place is for the full moon. Celestials prepare to celebrate, silly children, to greet the immaculate orb in the high heavens for showing up despite its shyness. If she listened to them, they would celebrate anything and everything. Amaterasu doesn't particularly care, but she holds a protective affection for her naps and peace, from time to time. If everyday was a reason to feast, it would sooner lose its spark.
She lays on a hill, muzzle resting on her paws, the Reflector warming her back in a tranquil dance of divine flames.
Waka sits next to her.

"Goddess," he starts, "What are they doing ?"
Partying, Amaterasu answers dryly, prying an eye open for good measure.

Waka huffs, and she spies a twitch on in his lips.

"I *meant*, why are they doing such a thing for a full moon ?"

And oh, there it is. The cause of the recent unease. A low rumble grows in her chest as she stays silent, wondering.

They do not celebrate the moon, she says after a moment, tilting her head, *How do I put it. Celestials love immensely. They are beings of joy and life, and thus find those same features in what exists around them. They adore the colour of cherry blossoms, and so they made a festival for them. They have taken a liking for the appearance of the full moon, and so they celebrate its return.*

The man is quiet for a long time. It's alright. Amaterasu knows hearts are akin to flower crowns, so intricately constructed it can take time to make sense of the flowers present.

"They are strange," he breathes at last.

Does it bother you ? she asks, narrowing her eyes as Sado assembles something small and sparkly, throwing it in the air. It explodes loudly, and some Celestials start chasing him, covered with colourful ink.

"No," he says. Waka grins slightly at the scene, turning his body to face her. His eyes, the goddess notices, are so dark they could be black, a night sky with no light to guide him home. "If anything, I feel honoured that my homeland is remembered with such kindness."

Amaterasu gives him a wolfish smile before yawning deeply, nose perking in interest as the smell of food reaches her.

Share some of your stories, sometimes, she tells him, *The Celestials would be equally as honoured to include your culture in theirs.*

She stands and trots down the hill, a gaping Waka in her wake. Soon, there is a burst of laughter behind her back, and secretly, the goddess rejoices.

⁂

Spare with me, Amaterasu says one day, appearing out of nowhere next to the cherry blossom. Waka startles slightly, raising an eyebrow in bafflement.

"Now where did this come from?" he asks, shifting on his feet.

Amber eyes gleam.
That fancy light-sword you carry, she barks happily, *I would very much like to see it in battle. Only if you feel up to it, of course. I will not force your hand.*

Silence stretches between them. Waka stares curiously at Amaterasu, as if he couldn't quite believe her existence. Slowly, a smile brightens his face.

"All right," he consents, "But I must ask you not to go easy on me."

A sinister grin flashes on the wolf's muzzle as her canines glint.

Waka is beaten soundly, left to heave helplessly on the ground as a barely ruffled wolf sits next to him, panting. Solar Flare joyfully floats above her back, Waka's blade laying carelessly a few feet from him.

You are a wonderful opponent, the goddess praises enthusiastically, *You move so fast with your blade ! Truly, a work of art!*

The blond huffs amusedly.

“You’ve wiped the ground with me,” he recalls.

Sharp eyes focus on him.

If you weren’t good, I wouldn’t have needed to go to such length.

Waka pauses, taken aback. The wolf rolls her eyes and stands, the tip of her tail dripping for a beat as she summons a gentle gust of wind. It ruffles Waka’s hair, makes him shiver and the sweat gathered on his neck dry. Amaterasu picks the blade - now turned back to the state of a flute - in her jaw and drops it on top of his chest. With all the authority her title suggests, she puts her paw on his heart.

Waka, she says,*You truly are great. Being talented does not mean being perfect, and by all means even I do not belong in this category. You do not need to be perfect to be good at what you do or to enjoy it. Nobody on this Plain will care whether you can swing your blade well enough to cut down a bamboo forest. This doesn’t mean you cannot enjoy mindlessly swinging your blade.*
She lowers her big head next to his.
Do you like sparring, Waka ?

“Yes,” he breathes, transfixed, heart roaring in his ears.

Then keep doing it. Don’t spare because you have to but because you want to. Life is simple, Waka, if you live surrounded by what you love.

The man gazes at the goddess, speechless, before laughter takes root in his belly, erupting from his lips like a tsunami. He laughs, and he doesn’t quite understand why, but something feels lighter on his shoulders. Once he’s calmed down a little, he grins back at Amaterasu.

“I shall take your word of advice to heart, mon amie.”

⁂

Amaterasu doesn’t know why she agreed to such a silly thing. Granted, she knows she has multiple forms, and that she always adopts the same. She is also acutely aware of the Celestials’ curiosity and rampant stubbornness. Still, well. She didn’t think she’d ever found herself coerced in her own home to change forms.

“Okami Amaterasu,” pleads Hakuba, eyes round and bright, “We do not ask you to stay a human forever !”

The goddess raises an imaginary eyebrow.

“Well,” Sado starts, “Maybe not *forever*, but it would be fun to live for a while with a new side of you.”

Charming, the goddess thinks dryly.

“I’ve always wondered,” Izumi perks up, “Why did you adopt this form, Amaterasu? You have created the world, and humans as well. Did you not have a form similar to them at the beginning of everything?”

It is an interesting question, admits the goddess. The Celestials tilt their head to her. The wolf crosses her paws. *You believe I had an original form I was born in ?*

“Did you not?” questions Sado.

A loud chuckle rings out in the clearing.

Well, I suppose so. Though it might disappoint you.

The trio gasp, fumbling to try and desperately correct her.

“What are you lot doing?” calls Marco from afar, holding a bag of junks he must have collected on the Plain today.
“Learning about Okami Amaterasu’s forms!” shouts Sado.

Marco’s eyebrows rise high to his hairline, and soon he’s coming next to them, a curious glint in his older eyes.

Even you ? asks Amaterasu with barely hidden amusement.

“Forgive me, goddess,” smiles the Celestial, “But I must admit I am quite curious as well. For as long as I have known you, you have always adopted this form.”

Pensive, the goddess lowers her head on her paws. Speckles of light dance in her eyes, as if she was seeing something they couldn’t.

The closest thing to an original form I’ve assumed, she drawls after a long time, *would be that of an abstract sun. The beginning was an odd time, so fragile and unstable. I do not think I could have been anything like I am now, less a human.*

She shifts her hind leg, small, white flowers bursting forth.

I more or less recall taking a human-like form, she admits, *when they first started roaming the land. It felt… strange, and I found my current one works wonders whenever I wish to blend in with the crowd.*

“May we see it ?” Hakuba whispers gently.

Amaterasu huffs, and the divine glow of her fur twists, bending and curling around her shape. For a split moment, the goddess is too bright a light to be looked at directly, and the Celestials have to turn around to escape being blinded. When they look back, they all gasp in wonder.
The majestic white wolf shed her fur for a tall woman, skin the colour of porcelain. Long, ethereal white hair drops down her ankles, the tip as black as her tail, dripping ink on the

grass. The carmin markings that embody her divinity trace the shape of her face, down her neck, her chest, down her spine if one would dare look.

“Goddess,” breathes Marco.
“You are the most divine no matter which form you take !” squeals Izumi, clapping.
“I warn you,” Amaterasu says, voice deep and dripping with power, “I will not spend forever like this.”
“This is fine!” laughs Sado, jumping to grab her elbow, “Let us go, Okami Amaterasu, we need to experiment so many things while you’re human!”

The goddess huffs exasperatedly, adjusting the red robes she wears, and urges with a nod for the other Celestials to follow as she is led by ecstatic children to discover the Celestial Plain on two legs.

⁂

“I heard quite the tale from Sado, mon amie,” is the first thing Waka chirps when Amaterasu awakes from her nap. She takes the time to yawn loudly, stretching her sore limbs, before letting her deadpan expression fall on the blond.
Is that so, she muses.

Waka’s grin widens. He twirls the flute in his hand.

“I’ve heard you took a human shape, not too long ago. I feel terribly saddened my eyes were not blessed by this sight.”

What is so interesting about walking on two legs ? the goddess whines.

“Well,” the man hums, gaze unwavering, “For starters, it is new.”

The wolf yawns louder.

“Mon amie, come now! A mere glimpse, for a friend ?”

Amaterasu puffs out a laugh.

Only because it is you, Waka, she warns.

When the blond can open his eyes once more without fear of burning down on the spot, he stares blankly at the woman sitting crossed-legged, chin in her hand as she looks blatantly unimpressed.

“Satisfied?” she breathes.
“Not quite,” Waka says, and he points his unsheathed blade to her. “Mind for a spare in your new form, mon amie? I predict you would find fighting this way quite a thrilling experience.
”

The ambers in Amaterasu’s eyes glimmer to burning fires. A sharp grin stretches her face as she stands up too fast and too smoothly for a human.

“You’re *on*, Waka.”
(He’s helplessly beaten, those things never change. Amaterasu is a ruthless beast no matter what form she takes. It is what makes their spares so good to him.)

⁂

The Celestials confide their fondness for her human form. When she asks him, Waka simply says she should appear as she prefers, he would care for her either way. At night, Amaterasu kneels by the lake and spends hours watching that face, those teeth, these hands, this smile. When the Plain awakes and finds their goddess sharing their appearance, they cheer. When he asks her, Amaterasu says she never had any particular feeling towards this form, it just wasn’t something she used. But she would like to, if it brings such joy to them. And for their happiness, which really only contributes to hers, the goddess is ready to try.

⁂

They often meet under the moonlight. Not to spare, but to bask in each other’s presence. Their friendship is one they cherish dearly, for as long as it took to get there.
Tonight, Waka has an air of melancholy that reminds her of his early days on the Celestial Plain. Amaterasu lays next to him, wrapped around his leg. She rests her snout on the crook of his elbow, a gentle comfort in the darkness of his thoughts. Far ahead, on the other side of the plains, the shadow of the Ark of Yamato looms under the moon.

After a while, Waka starts running his fingers through her fur.

“How do you do it, ma chérie, to live such a happy life devoid of regrets ?” he whispers, words almost gone to the wind.

The wolf whimpers lightly. Waka breathes a short laugh.

“It’s alright, you need not answer. I’m just… contemplating.”

They stay this way, unmoving, the wind blowing its cold air on them. Waka shivers. Amaterasu lifts her head and coos. The wind stops.

I have regrets, the goddess voices, *Many of them. I often think about the places or people those choices might have led me to if I had taken a different path.*

She inhales deeply, her warmth melting into Waka’s.

I believe regrets are an important part of what makes you. They allow you to feel, to rage, to cry, to laugh, to love. Regrets can be beautiful for they are bearers of memories long gone. I have learnt to live with my regrets, accepting their existence and consequences. The difference is, I think, that I do not let them hinder my present or my future. I enjoy life because I know its price and its beauty; I enjoy the future because the world is a never ending well of marvels.

Waka hums, pursuing his lips.

It is a simple thing, to exist, Amaterasu finishes softly, *Your mind finds ways to make it significantly harder than it is.*

Waka lets out a minuscule snort.

“Wisdom from the goddess, mon amie ?”

She yawns, huffing.

Take it as you wish. I am a goddess, not a dictator of your thoughts. Though I urge you to consider this, if you please.

“You are bringing suspens into this,” Waka laments.
Amaterasu turns her large head to his, amber eyes calm and bright.

Show kindness to your heart, she whispers gently.

⁂

Life on the Celestial Plain is quite easy. The Sun rises, as it always does, the birds sing, Celestials giggle as they run through the long lush grass and let their hair tangle with the wind. Sometimes, just to see them laugh a little bit harder, Amaterasu waves the tip of her inky tail and wills a stronger gust to chase after them. Waka joins her, mischievous moonchild deprived of a cradle, finding his home with a goddess and her angels. They spare often, to the cheers of the Celestials both encouraging and spewing the wildest of techniques to try; they entertain, and Waka always loses, though he does come near the goddess.

Every day is unique and uneventful. Until, eventually, one stutters and changes everything.

2.

The Celestials wake up as usual. The sun has long been up when their eyes open, and for the first minutes of the day’s existence, everything is the same.
And yet.
They feel it when the warmth from the sky changes. The wind and the grass brush against their feet and their arms, urging them to go, herding them away. Life is still on the plains.
Waka is probably the first one to realize something is awfully, deeply, unnervingly wrong. He grips both of his swords tightly and resists the call to safety.
(It feels so familiar, this stillness, the closest the living will be to death.
The Moon was the same when the massacre happened.
He would know. He’s surely the last survivor.)

The first howl rings high, echoes throughout the entire land. It serves to acknowledge.

The Celestials perk up at the sound of Mother being safe and alive. Waka tells them to keep going, that he’ll go to her. They protest, Sado raises his bomb of ink and says he can help, but

the wind gets fiercer and the grass gets taller and flowers bloom to guide the way.

Waka watches them leave, heart beating loudly in his chest.
(He refuses visions, prophecies, not this time. Please, not a home again.)
He turns around and starts running in the opposite direction. His goddess is so simple, sometimes, she'll always put her loved ones further from her when danger arises.

The second howl is a warning.

The entire plain vibrates with divine power under its weight. Waka senses it, at this moment, the gigantic demonic energy coming from above. It is so wide, so dark, so strong he nearly stumbles. The Celestials shiver, stealing glances to the sky, to the clouds, unease growing in their eyes.
(But not fear, never fear, why would they fear, the children of the sun.)

The third howl is a *threat*.

It is the strongest, nastiest sound that ever came out of the Goddess of the Sun. The end of it ends in a roar, a growl that promises war and destruction in a torrent of righteous flame. From somewhere within the clouds, numerous cries answer hers, equal part menacing, twice more deadly. This intruder wants death.

Amaterasu sits at the edge of the Plain, Reflector hovering silently on her back. She doesn't blink.

The sound of wings fluttering echoes right next to her. Waka holds his flute in his hand, and for once, his voice is harsh and cautious, lacking the musical edge they both hold so dear.

"Ma chérie, would you allow me the honour of battling at your side ?"

Amaterasu tears her gaze from the sea of clouds and bends her neck to gently lick his hand. It doesn't require words to communicate with him. Everything is simple with Waka.

Darkness spurts from the clouds. The Sun burns anew, brighter in response. The Goddess jumps into action, Solar Flare bursting into multicoloured flames, a snarl in her throat.

A pair of seven glowing red eyes glow in the sky. The monster bursts from the clouds, and so the battle starts.

⁂

It's a bloody fight, unmatched in violence.

The sevens heads of the snake all strike on their own, inhabited by a will separate from the others. Amaterasu and Waka leap and roll constantly to avoid the fangs, sharp things that would have them torn apart at once. The heads have powers on their own, as well, and Waka winces as he watches Amaterasu do a series of movements with her tail, leading wind and water and fire and thunder and life to retaliate against them.
It's not enough.

The Celestial Plain suffers the assault of hellfire and the curse of a beast as large as the realm, and the grass turns to ash and the water turns to mud and the blue sky turns to smoke.
Amaterasu doesn't give up, she snarls and howls and strikes back as much as she can.
They battle side by side, digging indent in the golden scales of the snake, unable to injure until Waka slashes its eye. The head shrieks, twists, and he is sent flying on the burning ground. The goddess yelps anxiously, summoning trees and sending her Reflector to force the beast to retreat.

"I'm fine!" Waka grits as he gets up on a shaking arm, spitting blood.

Amaterasu barely gives him a glance before she is forced back into battle, a flurry of impenetrable armor and white divinity. Waka thinks back to the visions, wonders, thinks of a way to beat it, and –

Waka.

Amaterasu's voice rings in his mind, eerily calm.

He freezes.

Go to the Celestials.

"No," he breathes, and he takes a step forward, sword buzzing and at the ready.
A gust of wind pushes him back.

"No!" he protests.

They need someone to protect them, continues the goddess, *And I need to fight the beast. No matter what happens to me, they need someone to watch over their lives. I trust you, Waka, much more than you think, so please, go.*

He swallows with great difficulty, his grip on his swords harsh enough to ache. He notices the blood on her pristine fur, the useless attacks on the golden armour, and it breaks his heart, but he thinks back to the innocence and laughter of the Celestials and the kindness of this land and the moonchild makes his choice.
He whispers a prayer to his goddess and runs away from the end of the world. After all, if there's a need to escape, he knows a way.

⁂

The mighty heads of the beast roar. Amaterasu jumps, minuscule white dot burning bright in the darkness, and latches onto the scales of malice.
She takes him aback, the monster. It snarls at her as she bites and bites and bites and throws all her strength into it, as well as the strongest wind her power allows her still.

Together, they topple down the edge.
From the other side of the plain, hurryingly leading fearful Celestials to the Ark of Yamato, (because they are scared now, the children of the sun but they trust him with their souls still, him, the fallen moonchild who searched for a place to call home), Waka watches with

stunning terror the giant beast sinking his weight into nothing, and the tiny shape of light stuck on his side. She'll never let go.
It only takes one moment for the world to crumble down, he should know.

And the Sun falls.

3.

She finds him next to a hill.
Waka is slumped against a tree, clothes torn and heart broken. His eyes are half closed, because the horrors he sees behind his eyelids twist in atrocious shapes known and unknown and the guilt threatens to shatter him and make him scream.
He hears the gentle sound of familiar paws on the grass, and he doesn't need to look up.

"I'm sorry," he croaks weakly.

Waka almost flinches when a pair of arms embraces him. Strong and unwavering and endlessly warm. He melts a little in her hold.

"It's alright," she hums, "Breathe with me."

He shatters in her arms, grabbing at her shoulder despite his failures, crying in the warmth of the goddess they cherish and he knows he is unworthy.

After the sun has fallen and has risen once more, Waka finally raises his head. Amaterasu holds him steady, letting go when he shoots a small grin at her. His beautiful Goddess, so kind and so just and so human.
(Visions, visions, *visions* –)
At long last, the moonchild closes his eyes and allows the bursts of light and future to paint life behind his eyelids.
Amaterasu waits, resting on her heels, focused on him, amber gaze unblinking.
It takes a long time for Waka to open his eyes again.
(He's made his choice on the burning plain, answered his Sun's prayer there, prayed in return for all of her warmth and her soul, he would do them right, the moonchild, he'll watch over the children of the sun.)

He comes back to the world with a sigh. Amaterasu's fingers trace flowers in the grass, the ink melting with dried blood.

"I have a prophecy for you," he says slowly, "You cannot kill the beast."

She frowns, fingers twitching. Oh, Waka knows what she feels, she thinks of the humans and the beasts and the trees, she craves to slay the monster before it destroys her world and her children. He smiles ruefully at her. This is his choice. To make everything right.

"Only the chosen one can defeat Orochi." he concludes with the finality of an executioner.

The silence hangs between them. The wind ruffles their hair, white and blond intertwining. The world is at peace, untainted yet by the evil oozing from the Ark of Yamato. It will come, they know, they smell, they feel. The sun doesn't shine as bright. Slowly, Waka watches her make her choice. Her eyes of amber and charcoal and blaze are laid to rest at his prophetic words. The wild never relents in its efforts to protect its own, but it can be tamed if this is the necessary price to pay.

"Okay." Amaterasu says simply. Like it's such an effortless thing to do, sheathe her claws and cover her fangs.
"You trust me ?" He asks, bewildered vulnerability seeping through the cracks of a mask he's already started crafting.
"Always." the goddess smiles.

For as short of a time as it is, they are okay. How odd, he thinks, found helpless once more by Amaterasu's easy kindness, for the mother of the world to place her faith in someone as different as him.

A hundred years is a long time when the world falls in ruins of their own making. Waka watches Orochi establish himself in the land as if he owns it, demanding sacrifices, devouring people. He only takes a twisted delight in the sight of the scar he gave the beast, blind of an eye. Serves him right.
Waka watches as Amaterasu goes to Kamiki Village, gets thrown rocks at, cursed like a monster. And yet she comes back, relentlessly, waits for the chosen one to be born. He doesn't understand how she doesn't despair, but thinks with bitter fondness this is exactly why the Celestials were never afraid. They were so much like her.
Waka watches as Nagi wails in the arms of his mother. He shares a look with the goddess, and they know.

Amaterasu tells him she wants to give strength to the land of Nippon. She births her most beautiful flowers, on top of Kamiki and gives it a surge of divine energy. Little Sakuya is born, and Waka finds he cannot bear the innocence of her gaze. He stares at the night sky, decades ongoing, as constellations are drawn among the nameless stars, all parts of her power. It makes him smile a bit.

But all things must come to an end.
(He would know, the moonchild without a home.)
Amaterasu and Ishaku form a bond that is strong, a fondness shared between them that Waka hadn't seen since the Fall. She gobbles him up, ignores him, sleeps whenever he speaks for too long, but he knows, in his heart of hearts, that the divine wolf cares enough for the koropokkuru. They travel the land, fight evil, Ishaku paints, paints, *paints* the divine, until the full moon comes.
Nami is chosen, and for the first time in a hundred years, Amaterasu intervenes.
(*This* is her choice.)

Waka watches from afar.
He watches a wolf and a seven headed snake fight to the death.
He watches them tire, the same way they did on the Celestial Plain.
He watches the sake being drunk, the armor shiver and break, the fire lighting anew in the

goddess.
He watches a strong warrior raise his sword, a wolf calling the moon forth , and a beast finally, finally, brought down.
He watches a sword sealing evil, a cave collapsing, watches his goddess, his prayer, his miracle jump on Nagi as a rock falls and –
(Visions, whispers the moon high above, close your eyes, there are visions.)

He follows the hurried man and the panicked Ishaku back to Kamiki Village, both begging the wolf, Shiranui, to hang on.
(Ma chérie, *please*.)

The village is taken aback, but they learn. Goddess, mortals always learn and grow, is that why you care so?

His heart breaks a little more at every laboured breath the wolf takes, gaze hazy from the pain. He thinks he sees her grin despite it all.
(Ma chérie, mon amie, *Amaterasu*, please.)

Persecuted Shiranui, wronged Shiranui, heroic Shiranui draws her last breath. And just like that, this is the end.

The people of Kamiki, kind-hearted as they are, weep at the death of a newfound friend they only found far too late. But they are merely mortals, they don't hear the world wail as the Sun fades.
Sakuya bursts into tears. Animals look up at the sky, howling before bowing their heads in grief; trees and grass and rivers and hills and wind stutter and collapse on themselves, freed from Yamato-No-Orochi, deprived of a Mother. The Constellations gasp and hide, each of them receiving a power dug from their Mother's soul. Isshaku sobs in his small elbow, holding in shaking hands the only portrait left of his precious, precious divine friend.

Waka doesn't shed tears. The vision spoke, behind his closed eyelids. It bestows upon him the rebirth of his goddess, the rebirth of evil, the true end of everything.
Waka is tired, sometimes. Still, he huffs a chuckle and stares at the rising sun. A hundred years is a long time to spend alone, perhaps. It's alright, because for Amaterasu, he will wait as long as she needs.

He bows to the stone statue of a wolf and mouths a prayer.

His sun cannot come back soon enough.

(“Everyone says it's easy to adore me, “Amaterasu ponders, “and I am always baffled that they never consider the opposite a truth. Waka,” she grins wolfishly, “it is such an easy thing to love you.”

The man barks a laugh, shaking his head helplessly.

“You can't say such things aloud, mon amie,” he snorts.
“Why not if they're true ?” the goddess questions, raising an eyebrow.
“Well,” Waka starts, before stopping. He stares at her, at the plain, and a playful grin stretches

his lips. “You know what, forget what I said. Do profess your undying love to me more, ma chérie.”

Amaterasu giggles and he thinks he sees the stars he’s always watched as a child reflected in her eyes.
Yes, he thinks, it’s such an easy thing to love.)

End Notes

Can you tell I've been obsessed with what happened before the actual game

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